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**“Effects of Social Networking on ESL/EFL Students’ Learning”**

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## Resumen

Las redes sociales han desarrollado una forma innovadora de promover el aprendizaje del inglés a través de la creación de comunidades en línea; sin embargo, la aplicación adecuada de esta herramienta no es muy conocida entre los docentes. Por lo tanto, la presente síntesis de investigación tiene como objetivo analizar los efectos reportados de las redes sociales en el aprendizaje de los estudiantes. Este trabajo fue una investigación bibliográfica explicativa. Quince estudios fueron seleccionados a través de criterios de inclusión tales como la edad de los participantes, el tipo de estudiantes, y el año de publicación. Estos estudios fueron analizados en diferentes categorías para explorar los beneficios de las redes sociales en la adquisición del inglés. Los resultados indicaron que la instrucción en redes sociales mejora las habilidades lingüísticas y socioafectivas de los estudiantes durante el proceso de aprendizaje del inglés. Además, los resultados demostraron que los sitios de redes sociales brindan oportunidades para mejorar la comunicación y la interacción social. Por último, los hallazgos revelaron que este tipo de instrucción es adecuada para aumentar la motivación de los estudiantes. Futuros estudios de investigación se recomendaron en base a las brechas que se identificaron en el análisis.

**Palabras clave:** Redes Sociales. Aprendizaje. Interacción. Comunicación. Motivación



### **Abstract**

Social networking has developed an innovative way to promote English language learning through the creation of online communities; however, the adequate application of this tool is not well known among teachers. Thus, the present research synthesis aims to analyze the reported effects of social networking on students' learning. This work was an explanatory bibliographical research. Fifteen studies were selected through inclusion criteria such as the age of the participants, the type of students, and the year of publication. These studies were analyzed in different categories to explore the benefits of using social networking for English acquisition. The results indicated that social networking instruction improve students' language and socio-affective skills during the English learning process. Furthermore, the results demonstrated that social networking sites provide opportunities to enhance communication and social interaction. Lastly, the findings revealed that this type of instruction is suitable for increasing motivation in students. Further research studies were recommended based on the gaps that were identified in the analysis.

**Keywords:** Social Networking. Learning. Interaction. Communication. Motivation



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A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Evelyn Orellana Sigua", written over a horizontal line.

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First of all, I am grateful to God for guiding me from the beginning of my existence and for giving me the opportunities to grow as a human being surrounded by incredible people.

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## **Dedication**

To my beloved family, especially my mom and siblings, for supporting me with affection and  
love in my whole educational progress.

Evelyn



## **Introduction**

Technology, in nowadays world, has taken a crucial part in education. For instance, there has been an enormous emergence of websites or apps that make learning enjoyable. As Malerba (2015) mentioned learning environments are changing constantly to provide new opportunities for students. In this regard, the emergence of social networking sites during the last years has been a considerable advantage for ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students since these sites provide a modern view of learning synchronously or asynchronously. This happens because social networking sites help learners to increase their communication, social interaction, and participation in the learning process. Nonetheless, there has been a lack of understanding of how these social networks can contribute to learning English positively. Hence, the present research synthesis aims to discover the effects of the implementation of social networking on the English language learning field. To aid this process, an analysis of published empirical studies was implemented to provide relevant information.

Therefore, in the first chapter, the description of the research is included. The elements that are part of this chapter are the background, the statement of the problem, the rationale, and the research questions and objectives. In the second chapter, the theoretical framework is presented. The third chapter presents the literature review which encompasses the previous information from different authors about the topic. Then the fourth chapter includes the methodology implemented in the study with its inclusion criteria, databases, and keywords for the selection of studies. Chapter five presents the analysis of the results obtained through the complete revision of the studies. Finally, the last chapter includes conclusions and recommendations.



## **CHAPTER I: Description of the Research**

### **1.1. Background**

Social networking can be denominated as a huge system in which users or individuals can communicate and interact with other people (Alvarez, 2016). These systems connect users from different geographical regions or linguistic groups who interchange interests, beliefs, and opinions; breaking political, economic, social, and religious barriers (Baralt, 2011). As Boyd and Ellison (2008) argue, “social networking is defined as the web-based service that allows individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system” (p. 211).

In recent years, social networking has been submerged in a constant change. It has been recognized for its use as a social system for connecting billions of users from different places (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Moreover, social networking has been used for many other purposes. In terms of education, it has been used for learning another language, such as English since social networking provides a different and modern view of teaching and learning. As Malerba (2015) states, “learning environments are facing a process of continuous experimentation and exploration of new opportunities for language learning” (p.26). Thus, social networking provides online environments that create new opportunities for language learning (Alvarez, 2016).

Subsequently, teachers have included online platforms to construct alternative learning environments due to the evolution of technology and the integration of social networking sites for educational purposes (Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abidin, 2010). Furthermore, Cabrejas (2013) states that students are able to construct their online learning environments through the incorporation of social networking sites because they allow learners to participate and communicate proficiently.



In the same way, Bull et al. (2008) affirm that social networking sites allow students to create, produce, and maintain learning environments in real-time. For instance, Anankulladetch (2017) found in his study that the incorporation of social networking helped in the instruction of different and innovative learning environments for students.

## **1.2. Statement of the problem**

Online communities are incorporated in learning environments to enhance social communication and remove limitations of communication among learners (Derakhshan & Hasanabbasi, 2015). Nevertheless, social networking sites are criticized for its sudden emergence and diffusion in current generations. Indeed, Milosevic, Zivkovic, Arsic, and Manasijevic (2015) argue that the use of social platforms like Facebook, My Space, Twitter, among others, are involved in a controversial view for their inappropriate use. Besides, Anankulladetch (2017) affirms that social networking is perceived just as a type of technology used for entertainment purposes. Thus, the society is accustomed to see the use of social networking sites as a means of online socialization in which users spend a lot of time (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010). For this reason, there is controversy about whether social networking should be used in English educational environments.

Despite the fact that various online social communities have been included in English as Foreign Language (EFL) and English as Second Language (ESL) educational contexts, there is still a lack of understanding of how these online social platforms can be used to facilitate English learning (Liu et al., 2015). Therefore, it is crucial to understand the effectiveness of social networking sites on students' language learning, and the use that teachers can give to them to support learners.



### 1.3. Rationale

Current methodologies have adapted modern means to enhance factors of autonomy, motivation, and interaction among learners (Dogoriti, Page, & Anderson, 2014). One of those means is the use of social networking sites. Respectively, Malerba (2015), in her doctoral thesis, argues that “social networking practices in general present good prospects for foreign language learning because they favor interactions among learners” (p. 3). Additionally, Cabrejas (2013) affirms that social networking helps learners to construct their learning; either when they work in the classroom with online activities or when they socialize in online environments.

Moreover, social networking sites implement different ways to learn English since students can improve communicative skills through collaborative and spontaneous socialization. Indeed, Kabilan et al. (2010) mention in their study “constructing knowledge in a community of practice, learning together, and working collectively is much relevant to the structure of social networking sites” (p. 181). Likewise, Alyaa (2017) argues that the incorporation of social networking contributes to the improvement of English language learning.

In conclusion, social networking has been considered to have a great influence on the learning process. Thus, this research synthesis is relevant because it aims to collect and analyze reliable information to provide EFL/ESL teachers a clear understanding of the effects of the incorporation of social networking in the classroom.



#### **1.4. Research Questions**

- What are the reported effects of the use of social networking on EFL/ESL students' learning?
- How does social networking influence on the development of English learner's communicative skills for social interaction?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using social networking in English learning contexts?

#### **1.5. Objectives**

##### **General Objective**

- To analyze the reported effects of the use of social networking on EFL/ESL students' learning.

##### **Specific Objectives**

- To synthesize the reported influence of social networking on the development of English learners' communicative skills.
- To discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using social networking in English learning contexts.





## **CHAPTER II: Theoretical Framework**

In this section, the concepts, features, and theories regarding social networking will be presented. The theoretical framework will be divided into the following sections: definition of social networking, its features and types, social networking as a learning environment, social networking as a social learning system, sociocultural theory in social networking sites, online collaborative learning, and social networking and motivation.

### **2.1 Definitions**

#### **2.1.1 Social Networking**

Social networking is defined as a concrete place with direct connection on the Internet in which millions of people aim not only to have contact with friends, relatives or colleagues, but also to develop friendships, alliances, or groups with unknown people to share information and interests (Information Resources Management Association, 2015). Similarly, Churchill and Halverson (2005) mention that social networking is known as a popular structure in which people are virtually connected through common interests and ideas. Inside this popular structure, there are several sites and services which are constructed based on common locations, communities, and practices (Churchill & Halverson, 2005). These sites and services lead to a more specific definition which is social networking sites. According to the Information Resources Management Association (2015), social networking sites are defined as online communities or platforms in which users can create an online profile and connect with other users through synchronous and asynchronous means of communication.



## 2.2 Characteristics of Social Networking

Boyd and Ellison (2008) affirm that one of the most common characteristics of social networking is that it “allows individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system” (p. 211). In this system, users can share their profiles within a certain group of friends, also known as followers (Bazarova & Choi, 2014). Another feature of social networking is that it allows hundreds of users to connect at the same time creating an online community to enrich communication, social interaction, and collaborative work. As Schlenkrich and Sewry (2012) affirm, social networking sites offer users different opportunities for communication to share personal experiences or reflections. Most of the social networking sites include blogging services, photo or video-sharing features, and private message features; however, their design can evolve through the years because they are in constant change (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

Likewise, social networking connects users from different regions or groups who interchange beliefs and ideas; breaking any barrier that can difficult a connection (Baralt, 2011). As Kurylo and Dumova affirm (2016), “social networking sites are situated at the confluence of the new forms of social interaction and a cultural imaginary that now extends beyond the limits of nation-states” (p.9). As the last characteristic, social networking provides a sophisticated system that intends to be easy to learn and use (Schlenkrich & Sewry, 2012).

## 2.3 Types of Social Networking Sites

There are several types of social networking sites; nonetheless, in this paper, there will be an explanation about the most popular sites that are used among young masses.

**Facebook:** it is a type of social networking site that has been one of the most prominent for its innovative functions. According to Kabilan et al. (2010), Facebook was introduced to join



friends at Harvard University, and it gained popularity through the years for its innovative online platform.

**WhatsApp:** it is a type of social networking site that is recognized for allowing users to send messages anywhere at any time (Fattah, 2015).

**Instagram:** this social networking site is a social media sharing also known as a “photo-sharing application mainly for socializing” (Mustain, Husniyah & Zubaidi, 2019, p.94).

**Twitter:** this is a social networking site that connects users through short messages called tweets. These short messages are used to share common stories, news, or ideas (Pérez & Begoña, 2015).

There are many types of social networking, but this paper will refer to the ones previously mentioned.

## 2.4 Social Networking as a Learning Environment

Based on the information presented before, social networking promotes an innovative way of teaching and learning through online environments. For this reason, this research synthesis needs to provide a concept for learning environment due to the consideration of social networking sites as environments that promote learning.

Firstly, Bokas (2016) defines learning environments as a combination of two distinct concepts: an environment and learning. Regarding the concept of environment, Bokas (2016) describes it as the settings that surround individuals such as family, work, or cultural settings that involve many attributes. When it is combined with the concept of learning, the main function of



the environment is to promote and facilitate knowledge. In the same sense, Gayle (1996) states that “learning environments are the place or the space in which learning occurs” (p. 4).

As learning can occur in different settings, it is also necessary to mention that learning can be present in online environments. In educational contexts, online environments provide multiple tools such as forums, platforms, blogs, among others to construct knowledge. As Bandias and Gilding (2012) affirm, “online environments offer an educational domain that is unique in terms of the potential for interaction, participation, and collaboration” (p. 119). In the case of the acquisition of another language, online environments promote the use of the target language making this process of learning more beneficial (Malerba, 2015).

## **2.5 Social Networking as a Social Learning System**

According to Wenger (2000), social learning systems are characterized by the function to construct knowledge through social interactions and experiences in different social institutions such as the individual’s disciplines, industries, economic regions, and organizations. Blackmore (2010) stated that “over time, recognition grew that learning was not a linear process but relied on people’s interaction with others” (p.1). Social learning systems resist change over time. That is the reason why social networking sites play an important role in innovation (Blackmore, 2010). As social networking provides an online learning environment, it engages learners in a social learning system.

## **2.6 Sociocultural Theory in Social Networking Sites**

In this research synthesis, the notion of a sociocultural theory will be introduced in the setting of social networking sites. For this reason, the main basis of this research synthesis is the sociocultural theory proposed by Vygotsky (1978), which is considered one of the most



influential constructivist theories of learning. According to Lantolf and Thorne (2007), the sociocultural theory involves some principles, established by Vygotsky such as mediation in which the learner utilizes some cultural tools, like language, to mediate a relationship between the environment and the learner. One form of mediation is the regulation by which learners use a particular language to adjust their behavior and incorporate it into a specific community (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). Another principle of the sociocultural theory proposed by Vygotsky (1978) is the notion in which the human is a social being that acquires knowledge through the social patterns of a specific culture. Vygotsky (1978) names this principle as a process of internalization in which “every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level” (p. 57). Vygotsky (1978) establishes that learning occurs first between people in a process denominated as “interpersonal process”. Then, it occurs inside the learner in a process called “intrapersonal”. According to Lightbown and Spada (2013), the sociocultural theory supports the idea in which learning primarily occurs and develops through social interaction. Similarly, Malerba (2015) states that the sociocultural theory emphasizes the importance of the acquisition of knowledge through social interaction among individuals.

The last principle presented in this part about the sociocultural theory is the ZPD which stands for Zone of Proximal Development. According to Vygotsky (1978), ZPD is the gap between what the learner achieves without any help, and what the learner can do with the assistance of more capable peers. The view that Vygotsky has for ZPD emphasizes the importance of mediation for learning development. Similarly, Malerba (2015) mentions that “successful learning is strictly dependent on how learners interact with their peers to solve problems they cannot overcome by themselves” (p.64).



Online communities such as social networking allow individuals to interact and socialize in online environments. Baralt (2011) states that “social networking sites are interactive social spaces on the Internet where people can communicate and network with others” (p. 278). Hence, social networking sites allow learners to obtain knowledge through social interactions among their users. Thus, it is important to provide a connection of this sociocultural theory with social networking sites to understand how they can lead to the achievement of learning.

## **2.7 Online Collaborative Learning**

Based on what has been mentioned before, it is important to include a brief explanation of a collaborative learning approach. Due to the evolution of technology, social networking sites provide online opportunities to encourage the acquisition of knowledge through collaborative learning.

The collaborative learning approach incorporates “the theoretical sources from a neo-Piagetian and neo-Vygostkian inspiration” (Roselli, 2016, p.6). It belongs to a socio-constructivist explanation in which knowledge is obtained through a process of constructions of meaning among peers and the teacher (Roselli, 2016). In this approach, the most relevant condition is the exchange of knowledge and the participation of each peer in the process of learning. According to the constructivist theory learners acquire knowledge through social interaction among others. Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes the importance of social processes of communication to internalize knowledge. This is the reason why the collaborative learning approach is related to this theory. In the same sense, Brown and Lee (2015) mention that this approach incorporates principles of learner-centered instruction. This highlights the notion in



which students share and incorporate information and knowledge when they work together in pairs or groups.

On the other hand, with the evolution of technology, new tools of teaching and learning have been implemented to construct an online collaborative environment. Roberts (2004) mentions that the implementation of online technologies has transformed education due to the opportunities for collaboration that technology provides to support group work. One of the tools that technology offers to us is social networking sites. According to Kumi-Yeboah, Dogbey, and Yuan (2017) online collaborative learning provides opportunities for “knowledge building and construction” (p. 17).

## **2.8 Social Networking and Motivation**

Social networking sites provide online environments that enhance motivation through collaboration and interaction among learners. According to Yunxia, Zaidatun, Jamalludin, and Nurul (2015), “learners can get more motivation from each other through both competition and cooperation” (p. 159). Moreover, as social networking is considered a new tool for learning practices, it is important to provide a concept for motivation due to the features of innovation and popularity that online social systems provide to promote learning (Dogoriti et al., 2014).

Gardner (2010) indicates that motivation involves affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects that can be applied in different situations. In the field of education, Gardner (2010) states that motivation is related to the desire, the attitudes, and the intensity to learn something. Additionally, Lightbown and Spada (2013) define motivation as a complex phenomenon because it can vary according to the situation in which the learners are involved. Regarding language



acquisition, learners integrate motivation according to their interests in different situations for the achievement of practical goals or personal growth (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

In this section, some concepts, features, and theories regarding social networking have been presented. The theoretical framework has a crucial role in this research synthesis since it provides the necessary information to have a background that leads us to understand why social networking sites have been implemented in academic environments. Besides, through the information presented in this section, a connection with the studies of this research synthesis will be established.





## CHAPTER III: Literature Review

In this section, a review of the existing literature is presented to identify prior information in the area of social networking as an online learning environment. This section is classified into the following parts: social networking in English learning environments, social networking as means for communication and social interaction, collaborative learning through social networking sites, and motivation for language learners through social networking.

### 3.1 Social Networking in English Learning Environments

The implementation of social networking sites in English learning environments has presented a modern view of language learning. Several studies have found that social networking sites can contribute to learning by working as modern tools in online environments (Anankulladetch, 2017; Zafar, 2019; Saleh, 2019). For instance, Anankulladetch (2017) conducted a study in an adult school in Central California. The participants, who were 37 ESL adult students, were assigned to a treatment group and a control group. The main purpose of this study was to identify the impact of social media on students' learning performance. Through a survey, the author discovered that the 20 ESL (English as a Second Language) adult students of the treatment group, who introduced social media in their learning practices, were engaged and felt more comfortable by discussing topics in online communities. On the other hand, the students in the control group who did not receive social media instruction demonstrated less perception of engagement and participation (Anankulladetch, 2017). Additionally, Anankulladetch (2017) found that the incorporation of social networking helped in the construction of different and innovative learning environments for students.



Likewise, Zafar (2019) and Saleh (2019) found similar results in their studies. They implemented Instagram and WhatsApp, respectively, as the principal social networking sites to practice writing and reading skills in online environments. Zafar (2019), in his study, demonstrated that the students who were enrolled in an experimental group used the social networking site Instagram to avoid errors in their writing by sharing their works with others. Besides, Saleh (2019) arrived at a similar conclusion because he examined the effectiveness of using WhatsApp to enhance reading and writing skills. Saleh (2019) discovered that this social networking site functioned as an alternative tool for practicing English in online environments.

### **3.2 Social Networking as Means for Communication and Social Interaction**

Communication and social interaction are relevant factors that should be considered for the integration of social networking in learning environments. Different studies have proposed that the implementation of social networking sites allows learners to participate, communicate, and interact freely (Pérez & Begoña, 2015; Pineda, 2014; Kabilan et al., 2010; Alya, 2017). For instance, Pérez and Begoña (2015) carried out a study at Universidad Politécnica de Valencia, Spain, in which the participants were 75 EFL students. The researchers distributed the participants into three groups, one control group, and two study groups. Through the implementation of some tasks in Twitter and a questionnaire, the results revealed that the study groups who used Twitter as the principal tool for writing and reading demonstrated a positive attitude regarding the use of social networking for communicative purposes. Most of the participants of the groups who used Twitter in their English course have affirmed that this social media contributed to the improvement of communication skills due to the participation that students provided while writing some tweets and sharing them with their classmates.



Similar results were found in Pineda's (2014) study via the use of a social networking site called Wiggiio. The researcher reported in this study positive effects obtained with the implementation of a virtual environment for language learning. Pineda (2014) found that participants could construct an environment in which they enhanced communication with other learners and the teacher. The results from this study help in the understanding of how an alternative online educational environment crossed a boundary of communication in the classroom since social networking provided rapid access either outside the class (Pineda, 2014).

In the same sense, Kabilan et al. (2010) and Alya (2017) support this section with their studies conducted in Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, respectively. These researchers agreed with the idea that social networking sites had allowed students to participate in authentic interaction and communication. This happened because learners had not experienced this online instruction before (Kabilan et al., 2010). Thus, the results from these studies demonstrated that the use of social networking sites enhances the opportunity for students to overcome the barriers of the classroom in terms of communication and interaction.

### **3.3 Collaborative Learning through Social Networking Sites**

Social networking sites encourage learners to use the language and enhance the participation of students in collaborative tasks by learning with their classmates (Cabrejas, 2013; Yunxia et al., 2015; Chang, 2014; Fattah, 2015). For instance, Cabrejas (2013) conducted a study at the University of Valencia, Spain, in which 12 EFL university students were involved in a course during a semester in which they had to respond to several tasks on a social networking site called Ning Site. The researcher obtained results through the use of some tasks such as postings and discussion forums. Cabrejas (2013) found that students presented a positive attitude towards the



use of social networking for learning English with collaborative tasks. Additionally, students made wall postings in which they could include reflections and comments about the class activities. This study demonstrated through observation and students' opinions that the application of social networking sites helps learners to use the language and to learn from the ideas and opinions of their classmates.

Similar results were presented in the study carried out by Yunxia et al. (2015) at the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, in Malaysia. The researchers support this section with their study whose results revealed that social networking contributed to learning English vocabulary through online collaborative learning. This happened because students not only learned by themselves but also learned from their classmates by sharing ideas and new words to practice the language. Furthermore, in Chang's (2014) study the participants were asked to work on an English project that lasted 16 months in which they had to use the social networking site Facebook in the whole process. Through this research, Chang (2014) analyzed the patterns of interaction and collaboration among students via an open-coding and content analysis which included a codification of each text message of the participants. Thus, the researcher found that the students were able to collaborate in the project with each task as a group. Although Chang (2014) found that the students were using their mother tongue while they were chatting in the group, he emphasized the importance of the gathering of knowledge and experience by working together and taking advantage of other's abilities.

Besides, Fattah (2015) provided similar results with his research study in which collaboration among students through the social network WhatsApp was crucial to enhance writing skills. The participants enrolled in this study were 30 EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students that



were divided into an experimental group and a control group. The results obtained through a pre-test and post-test demonstrated that the treatment group responded positively with their writing process by using WhatsApp as an alternative tool for learning English (Fattah, 2015). Thus, the results of Fattah's (2015) study contributed to this section with information about how social networking sites could provide more confidence to students to give and receive feedback from others, and mostly, collaborate in an online community.

### **3.4 Motivation for Language Learners through Social Networking**

As it was mentioned before, social networking sites promoted social interaction, communication, and collaboration. Moreover, Dogoriti et al. (2014), AbuSa'aleek (2015), Mustain et al. (2019), and Ali and Bin-Hady (2019) explained that social networks provided an enormous opportunity to improve motivation on students. For instance, Dogoriti et al. (2014) carried out a study in which they applied two surveys directed to 65 EFL Saudi Arabian students. The results of this study revealed that 90% of the students preferred Facebook as a social platform for English practices. This happened because Facebook encouraged learners to participate in the tasks and motivated them to use the language in an innovative and popular social environment. Similarly, AbuSa'aleek (2015) discovered, through his research study, that students agreed with the consideration of Facebook as a learning tool that enhances their motivation for learning English.

Additionally, Mustain et al. (2019) support this section with their study conducted at the State Polytechnic of Malang, Indonesia. The participants who were involved in this study were 100 EFL students of the Business Administration Department. This study aimed to analyze the student's perceptions by using Instagram in their learning practices. Moreover, the data were



collected through a questionnaire, a survey, and a semi-structured interview. Additionally, students used Instagram as an online marketing tool. As a result, the researchers found that students felt more motivated to use the target language in this popular social networking site by posting their tasks and sharing with their classmates online. In the same sense, Ali and Bin-Hady (2019) conducted a study with 55 Saudi Arabian EFL college students. The researchers implemented the social network site WhatsApp as an additional tool for the learning process. Through a questionnaire, Ali and Bin-Hady (2019) discovered that students responded positively to the implementation of this social networking site on their language skills. Moreover, the study revealed that the use of WhatsApp as a tool for learning English improved motivation for students to use the language freely.

This literature review includes the appropriate and necessary information for this research synthesis, based on several studies. These studies provided relevant data that help us understand of the effects of social networking on EFL and ESL students' learning. Likewise, this literature review includes the basis for the future analysis and interpretation of information of this research synthesis.



## CHAPTER IV: Methodology

This research synthesis carried out an explanatory bibliographical research to demonstrate the effects of the use of social networking on EFL and ESL students' learning. This type of research has been considered relevant to collect reliable information in the field because it “enables the search community to compare and combine findings across individual studies” (Norris & Ortega, 2006, p.4). Moreover, a coding process based on specific criteria was used for the selection of studies in this research synthesis.

Firstly, the maturity of the participants served as the inclusion criteria for the selection of the studies. Thus, the participants of the selected studies had to be older than 18 years old due to their seriousness and commitment when they use social networking sites. Additionally, the participants had to be EFL and ESL students to analyze how the implementation of social networking in English learning contexts affected these learners. Moreover, the reviewed articles had to be published for the last 12 years to explain the recent changes, and progress of social media in EFL/ESL educational environments. Finally, there was not a restriction with the design of the studies which might use quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method approaches.

The articles were selected through databases such as ResearchGate, Redalyc.org, Dialnet, Scholar Google, Elsevier, Academia, and CiteSeer. The keywords used for this project were *Social Networking, sites, learning, English, influence, impact, use, language, vocabulary, interaction, and environments*. Besides, the journals that were revised are the *International Journal of Linguistics, International Journal of Learning and Teaching, Jurnal Teknologi, Ibérica, Íkala, English for Specific Purposes World, Revista de Innovación Educativa* among others. Lastly, 15 studies were selected to perform this synthesis.



## CHAPTER V: Analysis

In this section, a coding process was implemented to analyze the 15 studies in different categories. The categories for the analysis of this research synthesis were, the year of publication of the studies, the type of social networking site used in the research, the type of students (EFL or ESL) involved in the studies, the location where the studies took place, the effects of social networking on students' English language performance, the influence of social networking in communicative skills, and the advantages and disadvantages of using social networking in the English classroom.

### 5.1 Year of Publication of the Studies

Table 1

*Year of Publication of the Studies*

Year of publication	No. of Studies	Author/ Year	%
2010-2014	5	Kabilan et al. (2010); Cabrejas (2013); Pineda (2014); Dogoriti et al. (2014); Chang (2014)	33
2015-2019	10	Pérez & Begoña (2015); Anankulladetch (2017); Yunxia et al. (2015); Alyaa (2017); AbuSa'aleek (2015); Saleh (2019); Zafar (2019); Fattah (2015); Ali & Bin-Hady (2019); Mustain et al. (2019)	67

**Note.** N= 15

Table 1 shows the classification of the studies according to the year of publication. The 15 studies were divided into two periods of time to demonstrate that five (33%) of them were published at an early year period in which social networking sites started to gain popularity (Kabilan et al., 2010; Chang, 2014; Dogoriti et al., 2014). The other 10 studies (67%) were





published during the last five years. This number of studies indicates that the use of social networking or social networks in the classroom has increased over the years with the incorporation of new technologies to fulfill different communicative needs (Saleh, 2019; Fattah, 2015). As our technological world is in constant change, these studies show that researchers give importance to the idea of implementing social networking sites for academic purposes since technology allows students to access knowledge without limits (Ali & Bin-Hady, 2019).

## 5.2 Type of Social Networking Implemented in the Studies

Table 2

*Type of Social Networking Site*

Types of social networking site	No. of studies	Author/ Year	%
Facebook	5	Dogoriti et al. (2014); Kabilan et al. (2010); Alyaa (2017); AbuSa'aleek (2015), Chang (2014)	33
WhatsApp	3	Ali & Bin-Hady (2019); Fattah (2015), Saleh (2019)	20
Twitter	1	Pérez & Begoña (2015)	7
Instagram	2	Zafar (2019); Mustain et al. (2019)	13
Others	4	Yunxia et al. (2015); Pineda (2014); Cabrejas (2013); Anankulladetch (2017)	27

**Note.** N=15

Table 2 presents a classification based on the type of social networking site implemented in the studies. This table demonstrates that Facebook is the predominant social networking site. It has been more used among researchers for the features and opportunities that it has to support



communication and interaction among its users (AbuSa'aleek, 2015; Dogoriti et al., 2014). Also, it is worth mentioning that WhatsApp, which is included in three (20%) studies, and Instagram, which is included in two (13%) of them, represent the emergence and progress of new social networking sites that fulfill communicative necessities of young and adult learners (Mustain et al., 2019; Zafar, 2019). The section of others involves four studies that implemented no-popular social networking sites such as Leiner Box, Wiggio, Ning Site, and an online blogging without a non-specific name. Although those social networking sites, included in the section of others, were not popular as Facebook or WhatsApp, they provided similar features to enhance communication and social interaction in academic contexts (Pineda, 2014).

### 5.3 Type of Students

Table 3

#### *Type of Students*

Type of students	No. of studies	Author/Year	%
EFL	12	Dogoriti et al. (2014); Alyaa (2017); AbuSa'aleek (2015), Chang (2014); Ali & Bin-Hady (2019); Fattah (2015), Saleh (2019); Pérez & Begoña (2015); Zafar (2019); Mustain et al. (2019); Pineda (2014); Cabrejas (2013)	80
ESL	3	Anankulladetch (2017); Kabilan et al. (2010); Yunxia et al. (2015)	20

**Note.** N= 15

Table 3 intends to represent the types of students, either EFL (English as a Foreign Language) or ESL (English as a second language), who were the participants in the studies. The majority of



the studies 12 (80%) included EFL students as participants of their projects while three (20%) of them included ESL participants. Although EFL students were not involved in contexts where English was spoken as a primary language, it is important to mention that the use of social networking contributed positively to opportunities to communicate naturally using the target language outside the classroom (Saleh, 2019). Moreover, as Chang (2014) and AbuSa'aleek (2015) mentioned in their studies, through the implementation of social networking sites, EFL students had the opportunity to communicate with native speakers of the target language.

#### 5.4 The Location where Studies Took Place

Table 4

##### *Location of the Studies*

Location	No. of studies	Author/ Year	%
Asia	9	Kabilan et al. (2010); Yunxia et al. (2015); Alyaa (2017); AbuSa'aleek (2015); Saleh (2019); Fattah (2015); Chang (2014); Ali & Bin-Hady (2019); Mustain et al. (2019)	60
Europe	4	Pérez & Begoña (2015); Dogoriti et al. (2014), Cabrejas (2013); Zafar (2019)	27
America	2	Pineda (2014), Anankulladetch (2017)	13

**Note.** N=15

For this section, studies were divided into three parts that correspond to the location where they were carried out. Table 4 shows that the majority of studies were carried out in Asia, and others in different countries of Europe and America. Four (27%) of the studies were directed in Europe and only 2 (13%) of them in America. Additionally, it is important to mention that there



was a unique study carried out in Latin America, in Colombia; it was Pineda's (2014). In his study, Pineda (2014) implemented a type of social networking named Wiggio. The author revealed that this social network contributed to the construction of an online community in which the learners and the instructor could communicate and interact freely. Besides, the study demonstrated that online environments helped the teacher and the students to manage information and knowledge. Although the study of Pineda (2014) showed positive results regarding the use of social networks in the classroom, this table shows that there has not been considerable interest in the implementation of social networking in academic contexts for countries of America.

### **5.5 Effects of the use of Social Networking on Student's English Language Performance**

From the data, 14 studies that mentioned the benefits of social networking on students' English language performance were selected to respond to this category. In the following tables, the effects, positive or negative, regarding the use of social networking are analyzed in two sections that involve the effects on language skills and the effects on socio-affective skills.



Table 5

*Effects on Language Skills*

Effects <sup>a</sup>	Description	No. of studies <sup>b</sup>	Author/year	%
<b><i>Positive</i></b>				
Improvement of language skills	Improvement of writing skills	7	Mustain et al. (2019); Fattah (2015); Zafar (2019); AbuSa'aleek (2015); Saleh (2019); Anankulladetch (2017); Kabilan et al. (2010)	70
	Improvement of reading skills	2	Fattah (2015); AbuSa'aleek (2015)	20
	Vocabulary development	3	Yunxia et al. (2015); Pérez & Begoña (2015); Zafar (2019)	30
<b><i>Negative</i></b>				
	No language improvement	1	Chang (2014)	10

**Note.** N= 10

**a:** Some of the studies were included in more than one category.

**b:** From the 14 studies selected for the category of “effects” 10 of them include results about language skills.

Table 5 shows the positive effects that the researchers found in their studies regarding the improvement of language skills. As Oxford (1990) mentioned, language skills are related to the abilities that are developed during the language learning process in which four principal modalities are involved. For the first section, the following categories were selected: improvement of writing skills, improvement of reading skills, and vocabulary development. Therefore, to analyze the effects in the improvement of language skills, the category with the



most representative number of studies was selected, in this case, the improvement of writing skills.

The results from table 5 demonstrate that social networking sites provided students with the opportunity to improve their writing skills by exchanging information in groups (Zafar, 2019; Saleh, 2019). When students were asked to share their projects in online communities, they concentrated more on their writing since the projects were visible to all their classmates. In the studies of Zafar (2019), Saleh (2019), and Mustain et al. (2019), the students' writing performances increased because learners published information for authentic audiences, trying to avoid grammatical mistakes and using an acceptable level of accuracy. Besides, the results from the studies of Anankulladetch (2017) and Saleh (2019) reported that students improved their writing skills due to the level of confidence that they developed in online communities.

Besides, table 5 indicates a negative effect regarding language skills since there was no language development. In the study of Chang (2014), students did not demonstrate an improvement in the target language although they worked together to achieve a goal. It is important to mention that in this study, students did not have the teacher's participation. For this reason, they did not use the target language when they worked together. This study not only showed a negative effect on students' language performance but also indicated that the participation of the teacher was crucial to encourage learners to use the second language in online learning environments.



Table 6

*Effects on Socio-Affective Skills*

Effects <sup>a</sup>	Description	No. of studies <sup>c</sup>	Author/ year	%
<b><i>Positive</i></b>				
Improvement of socio-affective skills	Collaboration enhancement	10	Dogoriti et al. (2014); Cabrejas (2013); Pineda (2014); Kabilan et al. (2010); Yunxia et al. (2015); Alyaa (2017); Chang (2014); Saleh (2019); Mustain et al. (2019); Fattah (2015)	77
	Motivation development	2	Saleh (2019); Mustain et al. (2019)	15
	Increase of participation	6	Pérez & Begoña (2015); Kabilan et al. (2010); Saleh (2019); Mustain et al. (2019); Cabrejas (2013); Anankulladetch (2017)	46
<b><i>Negative <sup>b</sup></i></b>				
	No peer-feedback	1	Pérez & Begoña (2015)	8
Others	Improvement of grades	1	Anankulladetch (2017)	8

**Note.** N= 12

**a:** Some of the studies were included in more than one category.

**b:** This study includes both positive and negative effects.

**c:** From the 14 studies selected for the category of “effects” 12 of them include information about socio-affective skills.



In this section, the studies demonstrated that social networking sites had positive effects on student's motivation, participation, and collaboration regarding language performance. According to Fandiño (2010), socio-affective skills are related to the social value of learning and are presented in different stages that involve some factors such as beliefs, attitudes, and motivation. Thus, in order to analyze the effects of social networking on the social-affective part of students, the category with the most representative number of studies was selected.

Concerning collaborative learning, the results mentioned that the use of social networking sites contributed to the construction of an online community by learning through the experience of others. One of the ways to obtain knowledge is through collaborative work among peers or groups (Roselli, 2016). Thus, these studies demonstrated that social networking sites helped students to learn as a community by sharing information and giving feedback to correct errors (Cabrejas 2013; Alyaa, 2017; Saleh, 2019; Chang, 2014). For instance, the study of Saleh (2019) indicated that through the use of social networks, teachers created an online environment in which learners could exchange chats or discussions to participate and learn from each other. His study also indicated that students who did not dominate the target language had the opportunities to learn from their classmates. As Vygotsky (1978) mentioned, more capable peers contribute to the construction of knowledge through social interactions and collaborative work. Moreover, the study of Chang (2014) revealed that social networking provided a positive effect regarding collaborative learning because it allowed students to solve problems about any task or project in groups. Certainly, since students work together and share their knowledge and experiences with their peers, they can achieve any goal.





Although, there are more positive effects in this table regarding the improvement of socio-affective skills; there is also a negative effect that, in this work, is included in a minimal number of studies. The negative effect included in the studies was the fact that there is no-peer feedback. In the case of the study of Pérez and Begoña (2015), the students did not provide corrective feedback to their classmates since learners demonstrated a lack of confidence in the class. The study mentioned that students felt scared to correct their classmates who had a higher level of English. For this reason, they just nodded when reviewing their classmates' work and preferred the teacher to provide feedback to them.

Finally, table 6 shows the category of others which consists of one study of Anankulladetch (2017). This study is included in this section since it is the only one that mentioned a general effect on students' language performance. It mentioned that via social networking sites, students had the opportunity to improve their grades. Anankulladetch (2017) worked with online blogging instruction with a group of students who showed an improvement in their grades by using this tool.

## **5.6 Analyzing the Influence of Social Networking in Communicative Skills for Social Interaction**



Table 7

*Influence of Social Networking*

Influence <sup>a</sup>	No. of studies	Author/ Year	%
Encourages to use the language	8	Anankulladetch (2017); Pineda (2014); Kabilan et al. (2010); Yunxia et al. (2015); Alyaa (2017); AbuSa'aleek (2015); Saleh (2019); Mustain et al. (2019)	72
Enhances motivation	7	Mustain et al. (2019); AbuSa'aleek (2015); Ali & Bin-Hady (2019); Yunxia et al. (2015); Kabilan et al. (2010); Pérez & Begoña (2015); Dogoriti et al. (2014)	63
Improves confidence to communicate	6	Kabilan et al. (2010); AbuSa'aleek (2015); Ali & Bin-Hady (2019); Mustain et al. (2019); Pérez & Begoña (2015); Anankulladetch (2017)	55

**Note.** N= 11

a: Some studies were included in more than one category.

In this section, 11 of the studies respond to the second question of this project regarding the influence of social networking on the development of communicative skills to improve social interaction. Table 7 shows the impact of social networking on the following categories: encourages to use the language, enhances motivation, and improves confidence to communicate. The first finding indicates that social networking encourages students to use the language and to learn from online communities. As Anankulladetch (2017) concluded in his study, via online discussion platforms, students were able to construct knowledge with their classmates, something that encouraged them to learn and communicate successfully in English. Additionally, the studies mentioned that when students were exposed to online environments such as *Facebook*, they felt more engaged to use the language as a result of the emergence of extra vocabulary that



encouraged learners to look up the appropriate meaning and used it correctly (Kabilan et al., 2010).

Concerning motivation, the studies indicated that the use of social networking sites produced a positive result on student's motivation. According to Gardner (2010), motivation contributes to the desire and the intensity to learn something. That is the reason why motivation has an important role in language acquisition. Additionally, Dörnyei (2001) affirms that intrinsic motivation is associated with the individual's internal factors to learn something. Thus, the studies showed that social networking sites enhance intrinsic motivation to practice reading and writing skills to promote communication and interaction (Kabilan et al., 2010; AbuSa'aleek 2015, & Saleh, 2019).

Moreover, Kabilan et al. (2010) reported that social networking sites enhanced motivation because students could share information directly with their classmates who had a high level of English. Furthermore, with the enjoyable systems and suitable functions that social networks provided, students felt motivated to communicate in the target language (Yunxia et al., 2015; Dogoriti et al., 2014). Besides, with online learning environments, learners were motivated because they were familiarized with popular social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (Mustain et al., 2019, Pérez & Begoña, 2015).

In the case of the category confidence to communicate, the results showed that social networking influenced communicative skills by giving students the opportunities to communicate in the target language without fears. As AbuSa'aleek (2015) mentioned in his study, students felt the confidence to talk and ask questions to their teachers and classmates using the target language. In the same sense, Anankulladetch (2017) mentioned that, via social networking



instruction, students who had a low level of participation improved their communication and felt more comfortable.

## 5.7 Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Social Networking in English Classrooms

Table 8

### *Advantages and Disadvantages*

<b>Advantages and disadvantages <sup>a</sup></b>	<b>No. of studies</b>	<b>Author/ Year</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Advantages</i>			
Accessibility	3	Pérez & Begoña (2015); Cabrejas (2013); Pineda (2014)	30
Facilitation of communication	10	Kabilan et al. (2010); AbuSa'aleek (2015); Pérez & Begoña (2015); Anankulladetch (2017); Cabrejas (2013); Pineda (2014); Yunxia et al. (2015); Chang (2014); Fattah (2015); Saleh (2019); Dogoriti et al. (2014)	100
Availability of a repository of material	4	Cabrejas (2013); Pineda (2014); Yunxia et al. (2015); Saleh (2019)	40
Availability of a complementary learning tool	6	Saleh (2019); Anankulladetch (2017); Kabilan et al. (2010); Cabrejas (2013); Pineda (2014); Dogoriti et al. (2014)	60
<i>Disadvantages <sup>b</sup></i>			
Informal environment	2	Kabilan et al. (2010); Dogoriti et al. (2014)	20

**Note.** N= 10

**a:** Some of the studies were included in more than one category.

**b:** Two of the studies include advantages as well as a disadvantage of using social networks.



From the total number of studies used for this project, 10 of them respond to the third research question regarding the advantages and disadvantages of using social networking in English learning contexts. This table shows the advantages that social networking provides such as accessibility, facilitation of communication, availability of repository of material, and availability of a complementary learning tool. It also shows a disadvantage that social networks cause in learning contexts; it is the consideration of the online learning environments as informal environments. Thus, to analyze the advantages of social networking, the categories with the most representative number of studies were selected.

Concerning the category of facilitation of communication, the studies demonstrated that social networking had an enormous advantage in learning contexts since online environments provided the features of communication and interaction (Saleh, 2019; Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abidin, 2010; Anankulladetch, 2017; Pineda, 2014). As Schlenkrich and Sewry (2012) mentioned, social networks contributed to the construction of social interaction with opportunities to enrich communication. For instance, the study of Saleh (2019) showed that through the implementation of social networks, students had the opportunity to communicate in English via online chats in groups that offered more time to practice the target language. In the same sense, discussion forums contributed to the construction of virtual communities to practice the language through communication among the online members. Besides, social networking sites provided students the opportunities to communicate with their teachers and classmates outside the class to discuss different class topics (Pineda, 2014). Furthermore, in correlation with Wenger (2000) who establishes that the construction of social learning systems is mainly based on social interactions, the results from the studies indicate that language learners could



communicate with others since social networking sites provided authentic social interaction (Kabilan et al., 2010).

In the case of the category of a complementary learning tool, the studies presented an interesting advantage that recommended teachers to implement social networking sites as additional tools in English learning contexts (Saleh, 2019; Anankulladetch, 2017). The studies in this section indicated that social networking could be considered an effective educational tool to implement in the classroom since students feel more engaged by building confidence to learn via social networks. The studies showed that teachers could use this tool in their classes due to the opportunities to support face-to-face interaction (Pineda, 2014; Cabrejas, 2013). Nonetheless, the studies mentioned that teachers should not use social networking sites as complete primary tools to replace formal classes (Dogoriti et al., 2014).

Table 8 also shows a disadvantage of social networking implemented in English learning contexts. Although the number of studies is minimal in comparison to the advantages, it is important to mention that two of the studies noticed the informality of the social networking systems. These studies indicated that online social networks were not recommendable for English learning contexts. Kabilan et al. (2010) and Dogoriti et al. (2014) pointed out that students could take advantage of online environments just for socializing and not for academic purposes. Although social networks involved informal environments, these studies mentioned that learners felt more engaged in these online processes.

In conclusion, based on what has been presented before, the results from this analysis suggest the implementation of social networking sites in English language learning due to the positive contribution that they provided on learners' English language performance and English



classrooms. The results demonstrate that the use of social networking has positive effects on students' learning with the improvement of language skills and the enhancement of collaborative work. Besides, the analysis provides positive results of the implementation of social networking, in English classrooms, through the advantages reported before such as the facilitation of communication and the consideration of social networking sites as complementary learning tools. Finally, social networking contributes to the construction of social environments that promote communication and social interaction, and improves motivation since students have opportunities to use and learn the target language as a community in authentic settings.



## CHAPTER VI: Conclusions and Recommendations

### 6.1 Conclusions

This research synthesis aimed to analyze the reported effects of the use of social networking on EFL/ESL students' learning through 15 empirical studies. According to the analysis, there was an interest to implement social networking sites in English language learning contexts. This happened because social networking sites were services that were created based on common interests to construct knowledge (Churchill & Halverson, 2005).

The findings from the analysis of this project can be summarized as follow: Firstly, in terms of the effects of social networking on students' English language performance, the analysis confirmed that social networking contributed positively to language skills and socio-affective skills on students. This happened because learners had more opportunities to practice the target language in natural environments by writing, chatting, and posting their works. Additionally, the results proposed that social networking sites improved students' collaborative work by learning as a whole group or community. As Bandias and Gilding (2012) affirmed, online environments offered a unique opportunity for education regarding interaction, participation, and collaboration. In the same sense, Vygotsky (1978) and Wenger (2000) mentioned that learning was constructed through social interactions among learners in different circumstances.

Second, based on the analysis and its results, social networking sites were suitable for increasing motivation in students. Via social networking, students could feel motivated to communicate in the target language through competitions and collaborative works (Yunxia et al., 2015). According to Lightbown and Spada (2013), learners integrated motivation depending on





their interests and situations. For this reason, social networking sites were considered motivating for students since they were familiar with those systems, and they enjoyed participating with them.

Third, the results from the analysis confirmed that the implementation of social networking sites provided some advantages for the English classroom as they could be used anywhere and at any time without time constraints. This was a result of the opportunities for communication that social networking provided (Schlenkrich & Sewry, 2012). Besides, social networking increased the alternatives to create environments to promote learning by working as complementary learning tools for the process of education.



## 6.2 Recommendations

Based on the results of the studies, some recommendations have been established. An important suggestion for teachers is to apply social networking instruction in their classrooms because it helps learners to increase their intrinsic motivation, participation, and social interaction with other classmates and teachers. Likewise, this instruction should be taken into consideration in the teaching process because it encourages learners to use the target language facilitating communication with others. Furthermore, it is recommended to integrate social networking sites into the teaching process only as complementary tools, avoiding the total replacement of them for formal classes. In the same sense, teachers should adopt social networking instruction according to the age of students since the maturity of learners is essential to apply these technological tools.

Similarly, based on the analysis presented before, it is relevant to provide some recommendations for further research concerning the implementation of social networking sites in the field of education. As the majority of the studies were conducted in countries of Asia and Europe, conducting more studies in countries of Latin America to promote the use of social networking and support language learning with innovative systems is recommended. Besides, further research is needed to explore the perceptions of teachers on the use of social networking since all of the studies presented in the previous analysis emphasized the benefits on student's learning; nonetheless, it is also important to know the view of teachers. Lastly, further research is essential to show the effects of social networking sites on students' speaking and listening skills because the previous results only highlighted the effects on writing and reading skills; however, social networks provide alternatives to support language learning in different ways.



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## Appendix

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